

Meeting notes:

Mono Lake Shoulder Widening Project (26990_) PDT Meeting 0900 5-9-2001

Introductions-quickly went through self introductions of a couple of new folks to the meeting

Project manager gave a quick synopsis of the current status of the project. The schedule is not going to be met as it stands now. A new schedule is being developed and will be available for review at the next PDT. Right now, we are looking at a 13-month delay to the delivery of the environmental document, expected to be delivered in October of 2002. The draft should be out late this fall. It is likely that the 13-month delay will carry through the remainder of the work items. A Project Change Request (PCR) is being drafted to formalize the change in schedule. It is likely that the cost will also increase, and the PCR will also address this likelihood.

The Assistant District Traffic Engineer gave a report on the accidents that have been reported to the CHP between Jan 95 and Dec 00 (see attached summary). Ten of the 16 accidents reported were injury. Because a portion of the accidents were deer hits, this led to some discussions about deer fence and DFGs involvement in the project related to deer migration. There has been some deer fence placed in the district with limited success, and some deer fence placed around the state with unknown success. Generally, deer fence is not effective unless an alternate method of crossing the highway is provided for the deer at the ends of the fence. This will be looked at, and could be added if it were determined to be beneficial to the overall environment. Deer migration may be helped, but the ground disturbance would go up. The environmental document should address the mitigation that may be needed for these two issues. There was also some discussion about how the accidents would be reduced by the proposed project. The traffic department indicates that statistically accidents would be decreased by 33% by widening shoulders from 3 feet to 8 feet. Currently about 75% of the project has less than 8 foot shoulders.

Notified all at the meeting that a website has been set up for this project to try to allow everyone access to information as it becomes available. Right now it has very limited information only on this project. Over the next several months, we hope to add more projects and more detailed information. The website is: http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist9/dist_9/fus/projmgmt/projects.htm

STATE PARKS: Ken Anderson brought a rough draft of a concept for the marina area improvements. They would like to know what the total area of disturbance is to the State Parks land because of this project. Be sure to address the visual impact the the project will have.

TRAFFIC: Bryan Winzenread, No additional info at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Juan Torres, questioned the team on whether or not we want to go forward with the public meeting with the limited information that we have at this time. General thoughts were that we should have the meeting and provide as much information as we have available at that time. Because the environmental document has been pushed out a year, the level of detail at this meeting will not be as high as it would if we were on schedule. Juan asked about Maintenance use of the fill slopes toward the lake to dispose of the rockfall debris. Maintenance indicates that in agreement with the State Parks, that dumping practice has been discontinued.

USFS: Roger Porter asked if anyone has been in contact with the department of Fish and Game (DFG). Juan Torres, indicated that the biology specialist typically does consult with DFG all through their investigations, however none of us at the meeting had direct knowledge of the extent or nature of the contact. Roger was also questioning whether or not the Sierra Bicycling Foundation has been contacted about this job and if they are aware of the current status of this project. Roger had a letter

from them expressing concerns over the downtown Lee Vining Rehab (currently in construction), and wanted to make sure that they were kept informed of what is going on here. He asked about the states position on providing turn lanes to the private businesses along the corridor. This would be discussed with each property owner and the outcome would be brought back to the PDT for info.

MONO COUNTY D.A: Will Richmond indicated that he is attending primarily because of the water quality issues that occurred on the Rush Creek 4-lane project. The District Attorney of Mono County requested that he attend to assure that the project has sound justification, and to make sure that the water quality issues are addressed. How is Lahonton a part of this team. They have been contacted at the beginning of the project, and the Notice of intent to write an EIS was sent to them as well, outlining the basic scope of the work.

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE: Lisa Cutting reminded the team how concerned the committee is about the possible visual impacts of the project, primarily the large retaining walls. Need o make sure that Resource Agency ideas and opinions are being addressed. Lisa asked about a retaining wall at the wetlands area. There is one anticipated at this time, in order to reduce wetlands disturbance. This is not set, as other environmental issues could change that.

MONO COUNTY LTC: Larry asked about the design speed and what has been determined. Explained that a 55 and 60 design speed are still both being carried forward as alternatives. Caltrans would certainly rather see the project designed to the highest possible standard. But the higher standard will involve more land disturbance. Need to look at the potential for a deer crossing facility in the area of all of the deer vs. vehicle accidents. If the project were to have 8 foot shoulders, would there be rumble strips? Yes, this is something that has been in ongoing discussions with the bicycle groups (statewide) but barring a significant change, rumble strips will be placed where there is at least 8 foot shoulders.

CONSTRUCTION: Luis Elias, be sure to get Lahonton Involved.

MAINTENANCE: Willy Williams, expressed concern about putting any pullouts on the west side of the road for fear that the folks would then cross the highway creating some potential hazard.

DESIGN: No additional comments at this time.

MONO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS/LTC: Joann Ronci, indicated that she thought it would be a good idea to send out an update to all of the resource agencies. This would help to insure that they were aware of the current status of the project and give them opportunity to raise concerns as early as possible.

The next meeting will be set for mid July. We will discuss the results of the June public meeting, and go over the results of the Lee Vining/RPAC community meeting, which will take place tonight in Lee Vining. If anyone has any specific agenda item they wish to discuss, please get it to me by the middle of June so that I can get the agenda out timely. I will try to keep a draft agenda on the website for the July meeting.

We adjourned to the field to look at and discuss the pros and cons of each of the identified pullout locations. The following is a brief overview of what we determined:

A. Throughcut south of Marina Road for northbound, PM 52.6: This site is outside of the project limits on the south end, additionally it is in the avalanche area and therefore is being **dropped from further consideration.**

1. Throughcut just south of Marina Road, PM 52.85: good location and view, potential visual impact as seen from the visitor's center, concern as to how close it is to the Marina Access Road. This site will be carried forward for further study.
2. Picnic Ground Road for north and south bound, PM 53.08: the intersection will be improved to provide for turn movements. The Parks have a concept of what they would like to have done to improve the attractiveness of the Marina area. Whether the area improvement is actually a part of this contract or done separately by the park service will be addressed at a later time.
3. Existing pullout north of skeet range for northbound, PM 53.22: This site is small and would need to be expanded, which would entail additional ground disturbance. There are some sight distance issues at this one, but it could be used and will be carried forward for further study. It is likely that if either this one or #1 were chosen, the other one would not, as these are close together.
4. Existing chain up area for southbound, PM 53.32: this wide area will be carried through to the finished product, however it is not a desirable location to encourage as a pullout for viewing purposes.
5. Old 395, pullout for northbound (700' S of Tioga Lodge), PM 53.94: good location, good views, this site would need some earthwork. It already has a couple of nice size trees for shade. This site will be carried forward for further study.
6. Next to old rock wall for southbound (S. of Tioga Lodge) PM 53.95: good location historic wall is a plus, good view. There is concern that travelers may walk across highway to get a closer view of the lake. This site should be carried forward for further study, but should be mutually exclusive of site number 5. Either 5 or 6, not both.
7. Existing pullout north of Tioga Lode for northbound, PM 54.28: this is a good site, with a diverse viewing area (lake, wetlands,etc) and close to the lake. There is a sight distance problem that would mean the removal of a clump of pine trees if this site were chosen as NB and SB pullout? This site should be carried forward for further study.
8. Adjacent to SCE driveway north of Tioga Lode for southbound, PM 54.38: This site is OK, decent views, partially obstructed by a clump of trees. Same concern as others on the east side, with pedestrians walking across highway to get a 'better' view of the lake. This was going to be listed as a possible, but low priority. However, this site happens to be on private property and the owner indicated during our field review that he would be against such a pullout on his property and would not sell. For that reason, this site will be **dropped from further consideration.**
- B. SB pullout, PM 54.8: the team decided that this must have been a duplicate of the #10 site, as there is nothing at the post mile listed.
9. Just north of SCE transformer driveway for northbound (brushy), PM 55.15: this site would entail the disturbance of way too much vegetation for the view that could be obtained. **This will be dropped from further consideration.**
10. Just south of Mono Inn at through cut for northbound, PM 55.46: good views. This site is on private property and the property owner has expressed concern about it being so close to their business. This site would require quite a bit of earthwork and in turn disturb some previously undisturbed ground. Site distance is OK, but could become a problem if brush were

to grow too close to the west edge of roadway to the south. This site will be carried forward for further study, but it is considered a low priority to the team and is subject to the land owners consent.

C. SB pullout, PM 55.6: this site is the same as #11, just a slightly different portion of the same general area.

11. Just north of Cemetery Road for north bound, PM 55.77: this is an excellent site for views and the potential for a true vista point and not just a pullout. Two problems exist. One, it is outside of the current limits of the project. Changing these limits may entail a lengthened environmental process, or the approval to change limits may not be allowed at all. Second, this would be a desirable vista for SB traffic as it approaches the lake, but SB vehicles trying to pull in would not be a very desirable turning movement. It was decided to recommend this site only if access could be obtained off of Cemetery Road. This would mean making some improvements to the County road for about 100 meters or so, and signing the highway as to the vista point's entrance. If this change is not allowed, or the impacts too high, this could also be pursued as a separate project.

In all, 9 possible sites will be taken to the June public meeting for comments. Two of these will be built (the Marina access and the chain up area). In addition, two of them will be eliminated as being a 'this one or that one, not both' issue. Therefore there are only 5 sites would be added at most, and one of them is currently outside the project limits which could eliminate it from the running.

ACTION ITEMS:

Caltrans units need to be prepared for the public meeting in June.

Project Manager: get a general update letter out to all of the resource agencies, and post it on the website for any others to look at (i.e. bicycling groups, etc) Look at impacts and feasibility of extending north limit to include the area north of Cemetery Road as a Vista Point. Look at impacts and feasibility of including some or all of the work at the marina in this project. Finish and circulate the project change request, notify LTC of impacts.

Design: Need an updated estimate for the four current alternatives, using conservative numbers for providing environmental mitigation (i.e. modified guard rail, aesthetic walls, specially treated slopes, etc.).

RPAC: provide an overview of the outcome of the May 9th evening meeting with the town of Lee Vining.